

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An air suspension system for a vehicle comprising:
a longitudinal member extending generally lengthways of [the] a vehicle and [mounted] mountable to the vehicle for pivotal movement about an axis generally transverse of the vehicle;
a locating plate [attached] attachable to the vehicle; and
an air spring disposed between said longitudinal member and said locating plate, pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis toward [said] the vehicle moving said air spring into contact with said locating plate and unloaded pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis away from [said] the vehicle moving said air spring out of contact with said locating plate.
2. (Original) The system as recited in claim 1, wherein said air spring is attached to said longitudinal member.
3. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 1, wherein said locating plate aligns said air spring upon pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis toward [said] the vehicle.
4. (Original) The system as recited in claim 1, wherein said locating plate includes a lip about a perimeter of said locating plate.

5. (Original) The system as recited in claim 4, wherein said lip has an inner dimension larger than an outer dimension of an upper portion of said air spring which is received in said lip.

6. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 5, [further having] including a protective skirt attached to said locating plate [which defines a lip].

7. (Original) The system as recited in claim 5, wherein said upper portion of said air spring is a plate attached to a top of said air spring.

8. (Currently Amended) An air suspension system for a vehicle comprising:

a longitudinal member extending generally lengthways of a vehicle and [mounted] mountable to the vehicle for pivotal movement about an axis generally transverse of the vehicle;

an axle assembly mounted to said longitudinal member;

a damper disposed between said longitudinal member and the vehicle, said damper providing a dampening force for said axle assembly;

a locating plate [attached] attachable to the vehicle; and

an air spring having [a] an air cell and a piston, said air spring attached to said longitudinal member and disposed between said longitudinal member and said locating plate, pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis toward [said] the vehicle moving said air spring into contact with said locating plate and unloaded pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis away from [said] the vehicle moving said air spring out of contact with said locating plate.

9. (Original) The system as recited in claim 8, wherein said locating plate has a frustum conical outer lip.

10. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim [8] 9, wherein said frustum conical outer lip has an inner dimension larger than an outer dimension of an upper portion of said air spring which is received in said frustum conical outer lip.

11. (Original) The system as recited in claim 10, further comprising a protective skirt attached to said locating plate.

12. (Original) The system as recited in claim 8, further comprising a gas feed extending through said piston.

13. (Original) The system as recited in claim 12, wherein a bottom of said piston is attached to said longitudinal member and said air cell is attached to a top of said piston, said gas feed extending along said longitudinal member and entering said bottom of said piston.

14. (Currently Amended) An air suspension system for a vehicle comprising:
a longitudinal member extending generally lengthways of a vehicle and [mounted]
mountable to the vehicle for pivotal movement about an axis generally transverse of the vehicle;
an axle assembly mounted to said longitudinal member;

a damper disposed between said longitudinal member and the vehicle, said damper providing a dampening force for said axle assembly;

a locating plate [attached] attachable to the vehicle, said locating plate having a frustum conical configuration;

a protective skirt attached to said locating plate; and

an air spring disposed between said longitudinal member and said locating plate, said air spring having [a] an air cell and a piston having a gas feed, a bottom of said piston attached to said longitudinal member and a top of said piston attached to said [rubber] air cell, said gas feed extending along said longitudinal member and entering said bottom of said piston[,], wherein pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis toward said vehicle [moving] moves said air spring into contact with said locating plate, said locating plate laterally locating said air cell with said locating plate[,], and wherein unloaded pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis away from [said] the vehicle [moving] moves said air cell out of contact with said locating plate.

15. (Original) The system as recited in claim 14, wherein said gas feed includes a coupling, said coupling retaining said air cell to said piston.

16. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 14, wherein said locating plate includes a [said] lip that has an inner dimension larger than an outer dimension of an upper portion of said air spring which is received in said lip.

17. (New) The system as recited in claim 1, wherein said locating plate includes a center portion defining a substantially continuous and unbroken surface that selectively engages an upper surface of said air spring.

18. (New) The system as recited in claim 17, wherein said locating plate includes a transversely extending lip formed about said center portion wherein said transversely extending lip has a greater diameter than said center portion.

19. (New) The system as recited in claim 8, wherein said locating plate includes a center portion having a generally flat contact surface for engaging said air spring and a lip formed about a perimeter of said center portion, said lip increasing in diameter in a radially outward direction.

20. (New) An air suspension system for a vehicle comprising:

a longitudinal member mounted for pivotal movement about an axis;

an air spring having a lower portion supported by said longitudinal member and an upper portion defining a first engagement surface; and

a locating plate held fixed relative to a vehicle structure, said locating plate including a center portion defining a second engagement surface wherein pivotal movement of said longitudinal member about said axis moves said air spring between an engaged position where said first engagement surface engages at least a portion of said second engagement surface and a disengaged position where said first engagement surface is separated from said second engagement surface.

21. (New) The system as recited in claim 20, wherein said locating plate includes a transversely extending lip formed about an outer perimeter of said center portion.
22. (New) The system as recited in claim 21, wherein said transversely extending lip has a greater diameter than said upper portion of said air spring.
23. (New) The system as recited in claim 21 wherein said first and second engagement surfaces are substantially continuous and unbroken surfaces.
24. (New) The system as recited in claim 23, wherein said center portion comprises a generally flat plate and said transversely extending lip increases in diameter in a radially outward direction.
25. (New) The system as recited in claim 24, including a generally flat bead plate mounted to said upper portion of said air spring to form said first engagement surface.